



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

**MISSION:**

*To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and create a safe  
community for families to live free of abuse.*

**September 15, 2023**

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## DVCC MEMBERSHIP EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

**THOMAS MANION**  
CHAIR, DVCC  
DIRECTOR, FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER  
FOR SHERIFF **MAXWELL UY**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

**DORNE HILL**  
ADMINISTRATOR, TRAUMA SERVICES  
FOR **RAYMOND L. CROWEL**, DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

**NICHOLAS AUGUSTINE**  
ASSISTANT CHIEF  
FOR **MARCUS JONES**, CHIEF  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

THE HONORABLE **SIDNEY KATZ**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

**DEBBIE FEINSTEIN**  
ASSISTANT STATE'S ATTORNEY  
FOR **JOHN MCCARTHY**  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

**ROCHELLE PERRY**  
CAPITAL REGION ASSISTANT, REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR  
DIVISION OF PAROLE AND PROBATION  
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

THE HONORABLE **KAREN FERRETTI**  
ASSOCIATE JUDGE  
FOR THE HONORABLE **SHERRI KOCH**  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND FOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

**TONDALAYO ROYSTER**  
COMMISSIONER  
FOR **JODI FINKELSTEIN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

THE HONORABLE **LYNNE HARRIS**  
BOARD MEMBER  
FOR THE HONORABLE **KARLA SILVESTRE**  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**BEN STEVENSON**  
DIRECTOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
CORRECTION AND REHABILITATION

THE HONORABLE **KARLA SMITH**  
ASSOCIATE JUDGE  
FOR THE HONORABLE **JAMES BONIFANT**  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

## PUBLIC MEMBERS

**AANIKA ARJUMAND**  
STUDENT MEMBER

**MAURA LYNCH**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**KENDALL STANLEY**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**LAVONTTE CHATMON**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**MICHELLE MAXBERRY**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**MINDY THIEL**  
COMMUNITY MEMBER

**JESSICA VOLZ**  
VICE CHAIR, DVCC  
ADVENTIST HEALTH CARE

**AMY PALUMBO**  
DVS LEGAL SERVICES

## STAFF

ASHLEY NOY  
PROGRAM MANAGER  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

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## COUNCIL INFORMATION

### **TERM OF SERVICE**

There are nineteen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) who serve without compensation and are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Five are Ex-Officio members who serve at the request of the County Council: The Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court; the Administrative Judge of the District Court; the Sheriff; the State's Attorney; and the Regional Administrator for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. There are six Ex-Officio members who are appointed by the County Executive: a member of the County Council selected by the Council President; the Directors of the Montgomery County Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; and Police; the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Commission for Women; and the President of the Board of Education for Montgomery County Public Schools. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three-year terms, at least one of whom must be an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and at least one of whom must be a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school student who is appointed to serve a one-year term that can be renewed for one additional year. In 2019, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was again amended to add two representatives from non-governmental domestic violence service or advocacy organizations serving County residents.

### **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**

The DVCC meets bi-monthly on the third Thursday of the month and has met ninety-three times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

### **LEADERSHIP**

The DVCC Chair and Vice Chair are elected by members via majority vote and serve two-year terms. In January 2023, the DVCC elected Thomas Manion, Director of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center as Chair, and Dr. Jessica Volz, Clinical Director of Forensics, Forensic Medical Unit at Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center, as Vice-Chair.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the seventeenth year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2022-2023, the four committees—Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning, and Offender Program and Policy—identified focus areas and made progress on executing recommendations from the previous report. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the past year and makes recommendations for the next year.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- The Victim Services Committee collaborated with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling to offer free summer camp via Zoom from July-August;
- The Education and Outreach Committee presented the Choose Respect Montgomery Dating Violence Prevention workshop, “Expect Respect,” to over 10,000 youth in 22 Montgomery County Public Schools and private schools;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated the 14th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Video Contest and received 283 entries;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated RespectFest, the annual Choose Respect event, virtually and in person where over 1,000 people engaged in content and activities;
- The Education and Outreach Committee distributed over 9,900 Family Violence Awareness Cards and Multi-Language Cards throughout the County;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recognized Domestic Violence Awareness Month with the campaign, “Walk in their Shoes.”
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee carefully monitored domestic violence-related legislation that was proposed during the 2023 legislative session in the Maryland General Assembly.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2023 - 2024**

- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continued partnership with ACCESS to Behavioral Health to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence who are also experiencing challenges related to addiction;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, the video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to outreach to the community to ensure the public knows about services available;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month with public events;
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services and the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

## VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

### CHAIR: THOMAS MANION

The Victim Services Committee is focused on assessing current programs, systems, and procedures related to domestic violence victim services, especially those collaborative services available at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC) that keep victims safe, hold offenders accountable, and break down barriers to long-term sustainability. The Committee has been collaborating actively with Montgomery County FJC allied agencies and other stakeholders to identify potential gaps in these efforts and/or areas of improvement. When necessary and appropriate, the Committee also seeks funding to offset the costs of any proposed recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee is focused on developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships to ensure that survivors in the community receive the best possible services at such a critical time. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below, as well as recommendations for the coming year.

### SAFE START SUMMER CAMP

The Victim Services Committee worked with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC, which runs the Montgomery County Safe Start Program for children who witness domestic violence, and Bar-T to launch the first Safe Start Summer Camp during the summer of 2019. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 health crisis, this program could not have been



duplicated during the summer of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. However, the Safe Start therapists were able to supply art supplies to children enrolled in Safe Start and were able to host arts and crafts activities with a therapeutic component through an online platform throughout the summer. Although the children were not able to have a full camp experience, they were still able to connect with their therapists and continue their healing process.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends continued implementation and expansion of the Safe Start Summer Camp Program through collaborations with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, Bar-T, and other stakeholders.

### ADDICTION SUPPORT SERVICES

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "research indicates that women who abuse alcohol and other drugs are more likely to become victims of domestic violence and that victims of domestic violence are more likely to receive prescriptions for and become dependent on tranquilizers, sedatives, stimulants, and painkillers and are more likely to abuse alcohol."

The Victim Services Committee has been working with the Montgomery County Mental Health/Substance Abuse Screening and Referral program (also known as ACCESS to Behavioral Health). They are working to create a referral program for clients at the Family Justice Center to receive services at ACCESS to Behavioral Health.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Victim Services Committee recommends continued partnership with ACCESS to Behavioral Health in the next fiscal year to provide assistance to victims of domestic violence who are also experiencing challenges related to addiction.

## **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

### **CHAIR: DEBBIE FEINSTEIN**

The Education and Outreach Committee continued to focus on domestic violence prevention this year. The teen dating violence prevention initiative, titled Choose Respect Montgomery, includes four primary programs: a teen dating violence workshop, “Expect Respect,” which is presented to middle and high schools in the County; programs for athletes to build a culture of respect, an annual event for teens, their parents, educators, and youth service providers; and a public service announcement video contest for teens. This year, the Committee promoted Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2022, held RespectFest virtually and in person, and distributed awareness materials on family violence prevention services. Highlights from each of these activities, as well as recommendations for the future, are listed below.

### **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:**

### **EXPECT RESPECT**

Expect Respect is an in-class presentation for students in middle and high school. The flagship Expect Respect workshop is a 45-minute interactive program that teaches young people in 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades about dating violence, provides opportunities for student involvement and features brief videos on various dating abuse topics such as verbal abuse, abuse through technology, consent, and how to intervene as a responsible witness. Local resources and national teen dating abuse help lines and websites are also discussed. This year, the program expanded to include workshops for 6<sup>th</sup> graders on healthy friendships, bullying and bystander intervention and for 7<sup>th</sup> graders on healthy and unhealthy friendships and relationships with a focus on emotional abuse.



Expect Respect is offered at no cost and is available in English and Spanish. Presentation requests are received at the Sheriff’s Office from various school personnel, including health teachers, counselors, and school principals; and from community organizations, including youth groups and religious organizations. Representatives from the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office, Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office, the Montgomery County Commission for Women and volunteers facilitate the Expect Respect presentations.

This year, facilitators gave 116 Expect Respect presentations to over 10,000 young people at 22 schools.

## **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: PROGRAMS FOR ATHLETES**

Choose Respect Montgomery wants to create a culture of respect among teens. To help, Choose Respect Montgomery helps athletic teams facilitate two nationally recognized programs for athletes to learn about leadership, respect, and conflict resolution. Futures Without Violence has a program entitled Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM). CBIM is a free toolkit that utilizes the unique and important role that coaches play in the lives of male-identified youth. These comprehensive tools assist coaches in planning important discussions with athletes about respect for women and girls, and that violence does not equal strength. Through CBIM, male-identified athletes learn skills to avoid violence and abuse in their relationships. Athletes as Leaders is a similar program for female-identified athletes. This program aims to empower female-identified youth to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual violence. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in creating a culture of safety and respect at their school.

Due to schools adjusting back to in-person school and the constraints on school staff, only Rockville High School implemented Coaching Boys into Men with their football team.

## **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: VIDEO CONTEST**

Abuse can make a victim  
feel broken.

1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE  
“BROKEN PIECES”

For the fourteenth consecutive year, the DVCC coordinated a Public Service Announcement (PSA) Video Contest for local teens in middle and high school. This contest raises teens’ awareness on the issue of teen dating violence, both through the creation of the PSAs, as well as the distribution of the finished PSAs on social media, YouTube, and in schools. Participants were challenged to create a 60-second video addressing either physical abuse, emotional/verbal abuse, types of technological abuse, financial abuse, issues around consent, examples of healthy behaviors in a relationship or bystander intervention. Students were also asked to include the phone number for the Family Justice Center. This year, all participants who followed the rules of the contest received 10 student service learning (SSL) hours. Participants submitted 283 entries (by 478 students) from 60 different schools. This year’s winner, announced at RespectFest on April 16, 2023, was “Broken Pieces” by a student at Poolesville High School. Along with the winners chosen by a panel of judges (\$1,000 for first prize, \$750 for second, \$500 for third, and gift cards for two honorable mentions), 12,935 students from around the county viewed and voted on a “fan favorite” video, which won \$500. The Fan Favorite was awarded to “It’s All Your Fault” by students

at Northwest High School. The award money was provided by the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. To view all of the winning videos, please visit <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/chooserespect/video.html>.

The DVCC will launch the 2024 contest in the Fall of 2023. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish, and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners at RespectFest in the Spring of 2024.

## **CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY:** **RESPECTFEST**

RespectFest took place virtually from April 10<sup>th</sup> - April 14<sup>th</sup> and in person on April 16<sup>th</sup>. During the week of virtual events people could attend workshops via zoom such as the opening webinar with a keynote speaker sharing her story of dating violence while in high school, Dating Violence Jeopardy for High School students, a workshop for middle school students, and a workshop for parents.



In addition, students could also engage in the content on their own time with various online activities that addressed bystander intervention, healthy and unhealthy relationships, warning signs, how to be an ally, teen dating violence 101, consent, technology abuse and a scenarios quiz. Students were also able to learn about different topics through the daily social media posts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, the in-person festival was held at the Wheaton Community Recreation Center. Over 550 participants attended. There were educational learning booths with activities addressing dating violence, how to help a friend, consent, bullying, financial abuse, technology abuse and how to talk to your child, in addition to self-defense and yoga classes. These booths were led by the One Love Foundation, the Commission for Women, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Career Catchers, the Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project, Chesapeake Counseling Associates, the Montgomery County Police Department and the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. Students could earn student service-learning hours if they engaged with these booths. There were also performances from singing and dancing groups from area schools. Participants could also visit the over 25 organizations that participated in the resource fair, get food from three food trucks, and enter the raffle contest.

RespectFest was a collaboration of partnerships with the DVCC, Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, Montgomery County Parks, and with generous funding from the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation, Verizon, Friends of KD, Honorable Duchy & Dr. Alan Trachtenberg and Stein Sperling.

RespectFest engaged over 1,000 people on what dating violence is, the importance of speaking out about it, and how to help people who are in abusive relationships. The more people who know about dating violence the better chance we have to lower the rates. In addition, the more people who know where to go for help leads to more people getting help and living lives free of violence.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue and expand collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through an annual event, the video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations.

## **AWARENESS CARDS**

Throughout the year, the Education and Outreach Committee continued to distribute both the Family Violence Awareness Card and the FJC Multilanguage Card to organizations and businesses in the county. The cards are available on RideOn buses, in the public libraries, and through food distribution sites. They can be ordered online for free to be distributed by anyone. This fiscal year over 9,900 cards have been distributed.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued partnerships with other agencies and organizations to outreach to the community to ensure the public knows about services available.

## **PROMOTION OF AWARENESS MONTHS**



To bring attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2022, the Education and Outreach Committee created “Walk in their Shoes” displays that were posted at over 50 locations including all Montgomery County Recreation Centers and Montgomery County Public Libraries throughout October. These displays included real stories from survivors along with a pair of shoes to illustrate their journey overcoming domestic violence. The Montgomery County Council with the County Executive and Montgomery County Public Schools presented Proclamations for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month with public events.

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE

## CHAIR: MAURA LYNCH

The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee focused this year on supporting certain domestic violence-related legislation in the state of Maryland. Below is a summary of supported legislation as well as the committee's recommendation for the coming year.

### **PASSED**

#### **HB0014- Family Law- Grounds for Divorce**

This bill makes it easier to obtain a divorce in Maryland by allowing a divorce to happen after six months of separation or if a relationship is unsalvageable.

Bill will be enacted on October 1, 2023

#### **SB0185 – Maryland State Police Gun Center- Firearms Surrendered Under Final Protective Orders**

This bill expands the purpose of the Maryland States Police Gun Center to include tracking, screening, and vetting of all firearms surrendered under a Final Protective Order in the state. In addition, it will also require the center to create and maintain a statewide database to track information on firearms surrendered.

Bill will be enacted on October 1, 2023

#### **HB411 - Criminal Procedure – Violation of Pretrial or Post-trial Conditions by Incarcerated Person- Victim Contact**

This bill ensures that law surround pretrial and posttrial conditions apply to an offender regardless of if they are released or stay incarcerated. If the offender violates the conditions of their pre/posttrial agreements against a victim who qualifies for a Protective Order, it is a misdemeanor.

Bill will be enacted on October 1, 2023

#### **SB0129 -Criminal Law- Sexual Crimes- Repeal of Spousal Defense**

Before this bill, marriage was allowed to be a defense for some sex crimes. This bill now allows for criminal charges to be filed against a defendant who has committed any sexual crimes towards the victim during marriage.

Bill will be enacted on October 1, 2023

**HB630 – Utility Account Holders- Victims of Abuse- Protection**

This bill allows for victims of abuse to terminate their utility bill and create a new account if there are any arrears. The account holder is only responsible for utility charges up to and including the billing cycle which written notice is submitted for termination.

Bill will be enacted on October 1, 2023

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC.

# OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

**CHAIR: BEN STEVENSON**

The Offender Program and Policy Committee includes members from Montgomery County and Maryland State agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. Committee members focus on evaluating offender programs within their individual departments and identifying collaborative opportunities to improve communication and offender services as a whole. The details of the committee's departmental and system review as well as recommendations for improvement are outlined below.

## **ABUSER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

The Offender Program and Policy Committee is continuing to work on initiatives to expand the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP). The AIP program is a 22-week group therapy program for individuals who are abusive to their intimate partners and who have been court-ordered to participate. Participants learn to take responsibility for their actions and to communicate more effectively.

Currently, this program is available to protective order respondents, and defendants who are supervised by Pre-trial services or on probation. Since last year, the Offender Program and Policy Committee has been exploring the possibility of offering the program to those that are currently incarcerated in the county's jails on domestic violence charges. These are offenders who would greatly benefit from this program. However, because of the COVID-19 Health Crisis, programs offered in detention centers have been slowly restarting again. Once operations return to regular status, the Offender Program and Policy Committee will resume working with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to offer the Abuser Intervention Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services and the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

## SUMMARY

Through the services provided by the FJC, the monitoring of domestic violence policy, and the implementation of numerous domestic violence prevention initiatives, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) continues to play an active and critical role in creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse. These activities and programs would not be possible without the support of DVCC agency partners, community groups and the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. In the coming year, the DVCC will continue to promote and expand existing initiatives and services as well as explore new, innovative strategies to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in Montgomery County.



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